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University of Dayton

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DAYTON, Ohio, January 28, 1975 --- The characters may be laboring under mistaken identities, but the audience will have no trouble mistaking the resulting lively comedy as the UD Theatre presents Oliver Goldsmith's "She Stoops to Conquer," February 6, 7, and 8. When the sparkling comedy, subtitled "The Mistakes of A Night," comes to life on the beautifully staged Kennedy Union Boll Theatre, it'll be no mere mistake. The cast, director and crew have worked hard to capture the wit, flavor and merriment of this classic 18th century post-restoration comedy.

"Pure restoration theatre," explains director Larry Selka, "was performed for the elite only, and had many in-jokes, largely about married people 'playing around.' Goldsmith came in at the end of the period, and his comedies have some moralizing to them." Goldsmith also switched from the traditional London setting to a country setting for this comedy, which examines the humorous consequences of mistaken identities.

"Class was extremely important at that time," says Selka. The fun starts when the Hardcastle's old English manor is mistaken for an inn by Marlowe, the young man Mr. Hardcastle has chosen to wed his daughter Kate. Marlowe, backward and bashful with all "genteel" ladies, cannot meet the eyes of Kate the lady. His true colors come forth, however, when he mistakes Kate for a barmaid.

Meanwhile, a sub-plot, stirred by Mrs. Hardcastle's son Tony and her ward Constance, complicates matters and adds to the merriment.

The characters, typical of the period and delightful in themselves, range from malapropos Mrs. Hardcastle, and Tony, the impish Puck, to wise Sir Charles who resolves the ending. They'll be portrayed by a cast of 16, most of whom are new to the UD theatre. "We're not trying for the English dialect," Selka says, "but the actors will use a clipped stage dialect and stylized acting."

Selka notes that 18th century England was a time when everyone was highly conscious of their looks, and even the men wore corsets. The costumes of the period call for different stage movements, especially with the padded, voluminous skirts. "It's a very handsome production, with elaborate wigs and costumes provided by Mask and Wig."

The scenery is also "picture pretty" with filligree backdrops and, true to the period, a precinium frame around the stage. Two large chandeliers, built by UD's designer Darrel Anderson while he was at Ohio State, will add an impressive touch. The chandeliers, made of various plastics, which remarkably resemble cut crystal, are on loan from Ohio State.

The set is designed to be practical as well, employing quick scene changing devices in order to keep the play moving. The play has also been cut in length to keep the pace lively.

"There's plenty of verbal humor, and sophisticated visual humor," Selka promises. "The whole thing should be a sparkling romp, and a fun family step into history." Four performances will be given. February 6, 7, and 8, with a 1:00 matinee only on Thursday, matinee and 8:00 evening performances on Friday, and an evening performance on Saturday. For tickets call the Information Center, 229-3244.